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ABSTRACT

This study examined characteristics of female members of the American Association of Counseling and Development (AACD). A random sample of 1000 female members of AACD was surveyed, with a response rate of 12.1 percent of 121 surveys completed and returned. A questionnaire, the Female Counselor Survey, was developed to gather data on demographics, personal history, erotic sexual contact, needs assessment, multiple role concerns, work environment characteristics, social support, work burn-out, female role and gender attributes, and personal and professional life satisfaction. Preliminary results suggest that AACD women are reasonably satisfied with their personal and professional lives. The vast majority of the respondents reported no erotic sexual contact during professional relationships or after the termination of such relationships. They were interested in receiving further training in areas relevant to both their own and their client issues. Older, more established, higher income women were somewhat more satisfied than the converse. Burnout was associated with age, drug/alcohol problems, more work pressure, and less professional satisfaction. Identified needs were similar to those of an earlier male AACD sample. Fewer endorsed needs for additional training was also associated with age, income, and years employed. (ABL)

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Needs and Concerns of Women in AACD: Preliminary Results

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Running head: NEEDS OF AACD WOMEN

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The following is a description of the preliminary results of a study designed to examine characteristics of female members of the American Association of Counseling and Development (AACD). The AACD Committee on Women sponsored and authorized this project. More specifically, the objectives of this study were:

1) to assess the needs and interests of female AACD members
2) to determine the prevalence of sexual contact in professional relationships
3) to determine the prevalence of symptoms of burnout
4) to examine the relationships between emotional distress, burnout, and life satisfaction
5) to compare these results with those from the study conducted on male members of AACD (Thoreson, Shaughnessy, Cook, & Moore, 1989)

Method

Subjects

A random sample of 1000 female members of AACD was selected and two sets of mailing labels were provided by AACD Executive Office. Surveys were then mailed to these women. At the time of this report, 121 surveys

(12.1%) have been returned and analyzed. The average age of respondents was 44 years (SD = 9.61) with a range from 25 to 71 years of age. 67% of the sample were married, 16% were single, 15% were divorced, and 2% widowed. The vast majority of the sample were Caucasian (93%). The distribution of highest degree attained was as follows: 83% Masters, 14% Doctorate, 2% Bachelors. The most frequently reported degree specialization area was Counseling (69.5%), followed by School Counseling (38%), Educational (23%), and Clinical (15.7%). All other areas of specialization comprised 7% or less of the sample.

Respondents were asked to identify the type of setting in which they were currently employed. The majority of the sample were employed in Elementary/Secondary Schools, Private Practice, or College/ Universities (33.1%, 22.3%, and 16.5% respectively). 7% of the sample were employed in Community Mental Health Centers and 6% were employed in Junior Colleges. The average salary for the sample was found to be $33,690 (SD=14,577).

Instrument

A questionnaire, the Female Counselor Survey

(FCS), was developed to gather the data to fulfill the objectives of the research project. The FCS comprises 195 items divided into nine sections: 1) professional-demographic, 2) personal history, 3) erotic sexual contact, 4) needs assessment, 5) multiple role concerns, 6) work environment characteristics, 7) social support, 8) work burn-out, 9) female role and gender attributes inventory, 10) personal and professional life satisfaction. This preliminary analysis examines all the sections with the exception of multiple role concerns, social support, and female role and gender attributes.

Emotional distress was measured by seven items. A five point likert scale was used to indicate how frequently respondent experienced the feelings. The internal consistency of the distress scale was .69. The items which make up the erotic sexual contact section replicated items found in the Male Counselor Development Questionnaire (MCDQ) (Thoreson, Cook, Shaughnessy, & Moore, 1989). The respondents were asked to indicate their attitudes concerning sexual contact between professionals and the recipients of their services and the frequency with which they have

experienced such contact.

The needs section of the FCS, based upon items from the MCDQ, was supplemented by items for this study. The section consists of 62 workshop or presentation topics and the respondents were asked to mark those topics which were personal or professional concern.

Work related burnout was measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Respondents were asked to rate both how frequently and how strongly they experience each of the items on a seven-point and an eight-point likert scale, respectively. Internal consistency was .80 and .83 for the burnout frequency and burnout strength respectively.

Finally, life satisfaction was assessed by a five item scale. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffen, 1985) was modified by having respondents indicate their level of satisfaction with both their personal life and with their professional life. A seven-point Likert scale was used. Internal consistency for personal satisfaction and professional satisfaction was .90 and .86 respectively.

Procedures

Preliminary copies of the FCS were mailed to members of the AACD Committee on Women, the president of AACD, and several individuals associated with a major midwestern university for review and comment. Revisions in the questionnaire were made accordingly. Two sets of mailing labels of a random sample of 1000 female members were obtained from the AACD Executive Office. The FCS was enclosed in a cover sheet, which comprised the cover letter, and was mailed. The subjects were instructed to remove the cover sheet and to return the completed questionnaire in the attached, self-addressed, stamped envelopes.

The cover letter explained the purpose of the survey and delineated measures taken to ensure the confidentiality of the subjects' responses. The subjects were informed that their responses would be anonymous. They were also reminded to not write their names anywhere on the survey and to remove the cover sheet containing the original mailing label. Secondly, items which may inadvertently identify respondents (e.g., specific place of employment) were excluded from the survey. In addition, subjects were reminded that

their response to any individual item was entirely voluntary.

Results

The initial question asked was "What are the most frequently cited issues of interest to AACD women"? The following were the most requested issues: Dysfunctional Families (57%), Self-esteem (51%), Developmental/Aging Issues (47%), and Burnout and Stress (44%). Power Issues, Grieving, and Parenting were each identified by 41% of the sample (see Table 2). All but one of the 62 items were endorsed by at least 10% of the sample. 82% of the items were endorsed by at least 20% of the respondents.

Comparisons between these results and those obtained from the survey of the male members of AACD (Thoreson, Shaughnessy, Cook, & Moore, 1989) were performed. The mean number of concerns listed by the female and male respondents was very similar, 10.4 and 9.4 respectively. Burnout/Stress and Developmental Issues/Aging were ranked in the top four endorsed items by both samples.

The vast majority of the respondents reported no erotic sexual contact either during professional

relationships or after the termination of such relationships. A total of three subjects reported sexual contact when in the professional role. When in the client, supervisee, or student role, a total of nine subjects (7.4%) indicated sexual contact with a male therapist, advisor, or teacher.

Several trends in the preliminary data seem noteworthy. Subjects appear to rarely report experiences presented in the emotional distress scale (e.g., loneliness, boredom, depression). The scores on the burnout scales indicate that respondents experience indicators of burnout only a few times each month and that those times are only of moderate severity. Respondents appear to be fairly satisfied with both their personal and professional lives; although they were somewhat more satisfied with the former than the latter.

The research questions included: Are there differences between groups of female AACD members on the number and types of needs identified, the experience of burnout, characteristics of work environment, and life satisfaction?

For continuous demographic variable, Pearson

product-moment correlations were computed between those variables and the dependent variables of emotional distress, needs, burnout, personal satisfaction, and professional satisfaction (see Table 3). Age, number of years employed, and income were found to be associated with fewer needs. Emotional distress decreased with age, income, and number of years employed. A propensity toward burnout was associated with younger age. Burnout was also associated with more pressure in the work environment and with less professional satisfaction. Personal and professional satisfaction were strongly related. Professional satisfaction was also found to be positively correlated with age, number of years employed, and income.

Additional comparisons of various groups of AACD female members were conducted through analyses of variance (ANOVA's). Single and married women were more satisfied with their personal lives than were women who were divorced, $F(3, 113) = 5.19$, $p<.002$. Counselors who reported having a continuing drug/alcohol problem experienced more signs of burnout than counselors for whom the drug/alcohol item was reportedly not applicable. More workshop topics were requested by

Master's-level counselors when compared to Doctoral-level professionals, $F(2, 116) = 3.72$, $p<.03$. Finally, professionals who specialized in College Student Personnel while obtaining their degree were less satisfied with their professional lives than were those whose degree specialization area was either Counseling or School Counseling, $F(4, 95) = 3.14$, $p<.02$.

In summary, preliminary results based upon a 12% return rate suggest that AACD women are reasonably satisfied with their personal and professional lives. They are interested in receiving further training in areas relevant to both their own and their client issues. Professional and demographic items were correlated with the level of satisfaction. Older, more established, higher income women were somewhat more satisfied than the converse. Burnout was associated with age, drug/alcohol problems, and more work pressure. Identified needs for this sample were similar to those for the earlier male AACD sample. Fewer endorsed needs for additional training was also associated with age, income, and years employed. These results need to be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size.

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Table 1

Demographic Information

AGE: $\bar{x}$ = 44 , sd = 9.6

Relationship Status: Married = 67% Single = 16%

Divorced = 15% Widowed = 2%

Ethnicity: Caucasian = 92.6%

Highest Degree Earned: Doctorate = 14%

Masters = 83%

Bachelors = 2%

Annual Income: $\bar{x}$ = $33,690 SD = $14,577

Work Setting:

Elementary/Secondary School	33.1%
Private Practice	22.3%
College/University	16.5%
Community Mental Health Center	6.8%
Junior College	5.8%
Business/Industry	1.7%
State Employment Office	.8%
Rehabilitation Center	.8%
V.A. Hospital	0.0%
State Hospital	0.0%

Table 2

Item Endorsement for Further Training Topics

Dysfunctional Families	57.0%
Self-esteem	51.2%
Developmental and Aging	47.1%
Burnout & Stress	43.8%
Power Issues	41.3%
Grieving	41.3%
Parenting	40.5%
Intimacy	38.0%
Emotional/Physical Abuse	37.2%
Expressing Feelings	37.2%
Parent/Child Relationships	37.2%
Anger	36.4%
Divorce	32.2%
Roles of Women	31.4%
ACOA	30.6%
Mentoring	28.1%
Gender Issues	28.1%
Substance Abuse	27.3%
Loneliness	24.8%
Counselor-Client Relationship	24.8%
Love & Sexuality	24.0%

Needs and Concerns	14
Multicultural Issues	24.0%
Suicide	24.0%
Incest	23.1%
Dual Careers	22.3%
Rape	20.7%
Career Decisions	19.8%
Retirement	17.4%
AIDS	17.4%
Leisure	14.9%
Social Support	14.9%
Lesbian-Gay Issues	12.4%
Physical Health	12.4%
Sexual Harassment	12.4%
Touch in Counseling	10.7%
Finances	10.7%
Disability	10.7%
Pornography	5.8%

Table 3

Correlations between age, years employed, income, distress, needs, burnout frequency, burnout strength, and professional satisfaction

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	1.00							
2	.51***	1.00						
3	.23**	.42***	1.00					
4	-.23**	-.16*	-.13	1.00				
5	-.28***	-.39***	-.38***	.25**	1.00			
6	-.22**	.01	.02	.21**	-.03	1.00		
7	-.26**	-.11	-.10	.21**	-.01	.57***	1.00	
8	.29***	.16*	.26**	-.31***	-.05	-.25**	-.18*	1.00

Note 1: * = $p<.05$ ** = $p<.01$ *** = $p<.0001$

Note 2: 1=age, 2=years employed, 3=income, 4=emotional distress, 5=needs, 6=burnout frequency, 7=burnout strength, 8=professional satisfaction